

If this all sounds very familiar, that is Patricia Thompson's point. She is not simply substituting Hestian for "women" and trying to give an old/new label to a feminist perception of dualism and patriarchy. Nor is she trying to beguile her listeners/readers into recognizing the domains she describes so that she can then say, "You see, you are a feminist after all." She is, instead, really talking about a broader view of the gender-intensive discipline of Home Economics itself and as her feminist, non-home economist readers will find, to their surprise, she has something new to say about the way we look at each other.

As she explains it, Home Economics has become a target for feminist anger—it has seemed to embody the values that have oppressed women: "Every bit of anguish and anger that feminists have felt about their role and status as women has been projected onto Home Economics uncritically" (p. 94). She introduces the Hestian dilemma with words that must be considered in and out of the academy as we assess the aptness of the metaphor itself: "As a feminist and a home economist, I find feminist theory helpful in explaining our present position. Our devalued, privatized, invisible world, the oikos, became a 'separate sphere.' The very thing that has happened to women generally has happened to home economists particularly, and even to Home Economics as a profession!" (p. 11)

Patricia Thompson's book/words are a challenge to home economists and to feminists alike, but the very nature of this challenge is in keeping with the reassuring, positive attitude of the book. There is no angry finger-pointing and fault-finding above or below the surface; instead, her challenge offers a way to open the dialogue at long last so that we can listen to each other. Patricia Thompson sees Hestian feminism as a powerful answer to the "current feminist dilemma about women and families" (p. 6), and from reading her answers to the questions of the women at Belcourt Centre, this reviewer thinks she is taking us in the right direction.

The book suffers and benefits from being presented as the proceeds of a conference workshop. The informal questions and the comfortable dialogue make easy reading and do stimulate thinking, but much of the heat and point of the ideas must be lost in so much ease. There is no time nor place in this format, in this setting, for deep explorations. After the initial introduction of the Hestian/Hermean metaphor, the best of the book is found in the second half of chapter three, "The Hestian Archetype." It is here, and with the brief reference to *Women's Ways of Knowing* at the end of the book, that more work will be done.

The book is not meant to be a deep exploration, after all. It is meant to get the dialogue going, and that, I believe, it will do. At the end of the third chapter, while making her stand on integration clear, Thompson throws out a challenge I hope will be irresistible:

It is not that males are male. It is not our husbands or our lovers or our sons that are the enemy. It is patriarchy. It is the assumption that male privilege is justified. Even for mediocre men! The men who have ambitions, who are not our husbands, our lovers, or friends, don't owe us anything. They benefit from patriarchy. And it's a mistake for women to transfer their loyalty to a Hermean system that doesn't have Hestian interests at stake. That's a lot different from arguing that patriarchy needs to be replaced by matriarchy. The drive to dominate and control is Hermean. The desire to connect and collaborate is Hestian. We need a Hestian manifesto! (p. 84)

As women—and men—unite to counteract the injustices of patriarchy, the dialogue will grow. Now these dialogues should welcome those who consider and wish to explore the Hestian perspective.

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NOTE

In writing this review, I have benefitted from conversations with Muriel Houston, doctoral candidate at Dalhousie University.

On Education. Northrop Frye. *Toronto: Fitzhenry and Whiteside, 1988, Pp. 211.*

The book is *On Education* by Northrop Frye. This sounds innocuous to a feminist, even interesting, because Frye has been a teacher all his life and is one of Canada's great intellectuals; but, the book is not innocuous. It is misogynist, with muddled thinking revealing its bias. Frye actually has praise for women in one chapter (and only one)—that which deals with culture and society in Ontario. What else could he do, given the stature of women writers in the province's history? In the other 18 chapters, women are ignored or demeaned.

The first alarm of his bias is in the sexist language. It is pervasive. We learn all about the professional man, the common man, the educated man, the young man, but nothing about women of comparable status. We find that

generalized people are almost without exception male. The only generalized person who is female is the social worker. (The imbalance is reminiscent of ads put out for butter except that the one ingredient for butter ("butter") defines the good side and the long list for margarine defines the bad.)

Frye knows about sexist language because I wrote him about it in 1982, after struggling through *The Great Code*. He has decided it is unimportant, and that the words "chairman," "spokesman," and "mankind" should fossilize into the language just as "Christmas" has for Puritans, even though this word contained the dreaded last syllable "mass" (p. 197). Frye was able as early as 1972 to call what had been Negroes "Blacks," because that is what Blacks wanted. He will presumably never be ready to accept the word of academic scholars who have analyzed in depth the negative effects on women of sexist language.

Frye's bias is evident in the context of his writing as well as in his language. He talks about the dragons of fascism and "the squealing maidens of democracy" (p. 3); he writes that "Not all Muses are soft cuddly nudes: some are obscene harpies that swoop and snatch and carry off..." (p. 28). He notes "With newspapers full of rituals of burning brassieres and bombing libraries, a convocation seems as genteel and uninvolved as an actress with her clothes on" (p. 88). He mentions a generalized anti-intellectual "girl who has already decided on a life of bridge and Saturday shopping" (p. 43). He does not mention the millions of boys who opt for a life of TV football and poker. Frye is disparaging about the "morals of a whore" (p. 98) and how a whore should be treated: "Writers looked at the blasted and blighted outskirts of cities...and felt that even if Nature were the whore that she is said to be in some of our earlier mythologies, there was not excuse for treating her like that" (p. 164).

It is perturbing to realize that Frye is not ignorant of women's past and present oppression and of the efforts of feminists to change this. He knows feminism has genuine social roots (p. 6) and grudgingly admits "I think I should have supported votes for women on grounds of general human fairness..." (p. 78). Yet, something nonrational in his nature prevents him from helping women instead of undermining them.

Frye's hypocrisy is well illustrated in his pronouncements involving human society and culture. He writes, "Language comes to us with a long history behind it, and has to keep adapting itself to changing conditions" (p. 196), but he continues to use sexist language. He notes,

"the descriptive and defining language of our day" (p. 145), yet insists on "mankind" instead of "humankind." He states anti-intellectualism is "to shrink from anything that would expand and realize one's potential" (p. 203). Surely to undermine women's possibilities by such things as sexist language is anti-intellectual.

Frye's pronouncements undermine women's possibilities at university, too. In the past fifteen years, with the advent of women's studies courses, women as never before have had a chance to research and learn about their own history rather than that of men. Yet, he writes, "The university can best fulfill its revolutionary function by digging in its heels and doing its traditional job in its traditionally retrograde, obscurantist, and reactionary way" (p. 37). Further, he notes that, "A student cannot call himself a student without acknowledging the prior authority of the university and of its courses of study" (p. 26).

Frye knows that an absence of a sense of history "makes society as senile as loss of memory does the individual" (p. 136), yet he does not opt for women's history which at present is almost invisible in universities. He writes that, "Bringing value judgments, either explicitly or implicitly, into the classroom strikes me as a dangerous procedure" (p. 139), yet surely ignoring women and their contributions is a value judgment in itself of the most basic kind. He notes, "The university informs the world, and is not informed by it" (p. 27); knowledge about women often has to be constructed outside the university if it is to be formulated at all, yet Frye would seem to find this unacceptable.

Frye depicts education as a militant exercise. It is "the battlefield against prejudice and malice, the attitude of people who cannot stand the thought of a fully realized humanity" (p. 203); Frye would use education's power against Marxism in the Soviet Union or the Moslem religion in Iran; without acknowledging this, he would seem also to use it against women.

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